

Journal of

Marketing Studies

(JMS)

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among Selected Garment Manufacturing Industries in Kumasi
Metropolis, Ghana: Evidence from a Developing Country.**



Contemporary Approach to Brand Consciousness and Development among Selected Garment Manufacturing Industries in Kumasi Metropolis, Ghana: Evidence from a Developing Country.

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Accepted: 19th Oct 2023 Received in Revised Form: 6th Nov 2023 Published: 17th Nov 2023

Abstract

Purpose: Brand development is widely available and extensively used by various garment manufacturers. Many garment manufacturers spent a lot of money on brand development to enable their manufactured products to survive in the garment industry. This study, therefore, employed the Akers Model (2012), to explore to brand consciousness and development among Small and Medium Scale garment manufacturers in the Kumasi Metropolis.

Methodology: The study employed a case study research design using a focus group discussion as a data collection tool. Data was analyzed using thematic content analyses technique to arrive at the findings.

Findings: The results suggest that the small-scale garment manufacturers were conscious of their brands; hence, leveraged the advantage of social media to create awareness of their brands. Their brands represented, quality works, neat work, creativity, trustworthy unique, and stylish among others. The public knows their brands on their social media handles. Almost all of them leveraged the emergence of the COVID-19 last year to distribute nose masks to their communities as a way of brand development. Also, the garment manufacturers used logos to depict their identity, represented on social media, participated in fashion shows, and used mannequins. However, few of them had slogans, customized packaging bags, TV/Radio advertisements, and costumed celebrities with no websites. Some of the challenges they faced include financial challenges, inadequate trainees and no government support.

Unique Contribution to Theory, Policy and Practice: The study recommends that the small-scale garment manufacturers should invest in continuous brand development strategies by implementing new generational abilities to inculcate new branding technologies to enable them survive in the global competitive environment.

Keywords: *Brand consciousness, Brand development, Garment manufacturing,*



Introduction

Background to the study

Branding is universally recognized to be among the greatest interesting marketing techniques used to triumph in a contest (Ogbuji, et al., 2011). A brand is described as a set of intangible and tangible characteristics intended to raise consciousness, identification, and prestige of a product, service, person, or institution (Ghodeswar, 2008). For centuries, the concept of branding has served as a means of differentiating one service provider or product from competitors. Though it has often taken part in a vital task in the trading industry, the modern definition of a brand has seen a major move and rise in significance for several firms, becoming one of the central tenets in marketing (Spence, et al., 2010).

Branding has become so prevalent in the Western world that so much effort is being directed to it. People used to discover about brands, for example, via mass media adverts. They respected the guy wearing the star for Texaco, thick and rich for Heinz, and so on. Prior to the widespread adoption of social media platforms such as YouTube and Facebook, businesses hired inventive agencies and armies of technologists to embed their brands throughout digital universe (Chaix, et al., 2010). Buzz, viral stickiness, memes and form factor have all become branding jargon. Marketers desired that consumers repeat brand messages with conviction. As such, they spent like bandits to create messages and spent again to check out how well consumers got the message. Given the significance of branding, these acts are absolutely necessary. Branding instills a strong and important product identity in the heads of consumers, encouraging them to establish and maintain an ongoing marketing relationship among the consumer and the marketer (Ahirrao, & Patil, 2017). It also acts as a strategic point of reference and aids in development of business by achieving integration between the firm's strengths and its external environment (Wong and Merrilees, 2007). Customers become devoted to a company when they can clearly distinguish its products from its rivals (Junneje & Junneja, 2008). As a result, brand awareness or consciousness is a significant step in marketing because it encourages businesses to invest more in branding.

In developing countries, branding is practiced in various ways. People may not necessarily call it branding or know what they practice is branding. For example, in Africa, the grounds of social events become cooperative runways for all moment to work out their area to explore in terms of fashion designs, as a result of communalistic living in general. Regardless of the event, bespoke garment wearers in Ghana become walking models of their normally exclusive "kaba and slit" designs, whether at funerals, naming ceremonies, marriage ceremonies, puberty rites, or other social gatherings. In such an environment, the gaze of the walking models and their corresponding model observers scour the crowd for new designs. As a result, the kaba (blouse) and slit couture creations initiate hundreds of new designs every day on the bespoke market. Similarly, traditional medicine manufactures often use jargons and mottos to create awareness of their products. Examples include "maalee maalee- kopaa kopaa pasooa", Zipman capsules – 'panyan wobete de ne' etc. All these can be defined as brands which are specific for the companies involved.

According to the Ghana Statistical Service (2015), the garment manufacturing industry dominates Ghana's manufacturing sector. According to official government statistics, the clothing industry employs more people compared to any other industry of manufacturing firms. Over 242,000 people are employed in the industry specifically even though four in every five females who choose vocational courses choose training in garment production. According to the Ghana Statistical Service (2020), there are four types of businesses establishments in Ghana. Micro establishments, small establishments, medium establishments, and large establishments are the four types of establishments. The vast majority of garment manufacturing companies are focused in micro-sized establishments employing only about six workers. However, in respect of literature, there may be little or no awareness given to branding and as such, much effort and resources haven't been allocated to promote these branding in the garment sector.

That notwithstanding, many garment producers in Ghana, including Kumasi Metropolis are advancing in novel ways in brand consciousness and awareness creation. The essence is using branding as an influence on garment manufactured products. A good example is Chris Tailor Creations, Genesis clothing, K2 Collections, among others. The rationale for investing in branding is to influence the satisfaction of consumers on the use of garment manufactured products. Hence, it is only economically viable that this various class of small-scale garment manufactured industries employ branding as strategic way to influence and change the face of the industry. Apart from this, other studies disclose that there remains evidence of copious studies on branding; however, not in the garment manufacturing industry in the Kumasi Metropolis in Ghana. Therefore, this study brings to light the brand development as a challenge in the garment industry in the Kumasi Metropolis in Ghana.

Statement of the Problem

Branding consciousness and its components are recognized as being one of the largest interesting marketing techniques used to win or overcome challenge in the garment industry (Ogbuji, Anyanwu & Onah, 2011). It is estimated that it taken into account for one-third to half of all consumer expressions of purchase intent (Zargar, Joshi, & Tipper, 2013).

Over the years garment manufacturing industries across the globe is reconned to be one of the oldest, largest and major manufacturing, trade and employment industry in many nations absorbing huge numbers of inexpert work like South and Central America, Asia, South Africa, Sub-Saharan Africa of which Ghana is of no exception (Zisopoulou, et, al., 2018). Lately, this has been noted that Ghanaians are trying to adopt the use of African-made garments for casual wear, whereas previously, it was primarily for commemorations (Obeng-Akrofi, 2020). As more people enact the use of African-made prints in the majority of their garments, the issue that may arise is whether branding consciousness is a factor that motivates consumers to choose them.

Furthermore, as consumers favor cheaper imports garments, local garment manufacturers have converted to the utilization of such garments. Garment producers who are still interested in manufacturing from Ghanaian textiles are unable to distinguish among these bootlegged garments

and their unique. This has resulted in garment manufacturers adopting brand awareness in to differentiate and provide more information on garment points of interest in to influence and end this challenge. According to the literature accumulated from various researchers, fashion clothing and branding clothing has been the primary focus in the world today for the past decade. Much work has been accomplished in this area in developed nations, but in third-world countries such as Ghana, specifically the Kumasi Metropolis, the field has yet to be examined and the outcomes have yet to be finalized. In this light, the study aims to investigate brand element consciousness and its impact in the garment industry in Ghana's Kumasi Metropolis.

Specific objectives include:

- To determine the consciousness of branding by selected SMEs garment manufacturers in Kumasi Metropolis.
- To ascertain the brand elements employed by SMEs garment manufacturers in the Kumasi Metropolis.

Literature review

Empirical evidences prove that some medium-sized establishment in the garment manufacturing industry undertake some branding practices as a way of developing their brands and marketing their products. In the exposition of Haute Fashion Africa (2018), it is observed that Christie Brown, a highly renowned fashion brand owned by Aisha Obuobi do partake in Fashion Weeks as a way of building the brand and promoting its fashion products. The exposition reveals that for instance, Christie Brown took part in the 'Arise Africa Fashion Week' in Johannesburg in 2009 and won the Emerging Designer of the Year Award. Subsequently, it was the only Ghanaian label showcased at the 'Arise L'Afrique-A-Porter' in Paris Fashion Week in March 2010. An article published on the website of Fashion Policen (2020) affirm that regardless of the emergence of COVID-19, Christie Brown still presented its Spring/Summer 2020 Collection in a virtual fashion show. It is evident that indeed, Christie Brown as a luxury fashion brand, stands exceptionally as a women's apparel and accessories manufacturer and retailer inspired by the African culture and art. More so, her garments and accessories have made an impressive statement, painting the runways with a fuse of color and culture, fit for the contemporary African woman (Haute Fashion Africa, 2018; Fashion Policen, 2020). Furthermore, Barnes (2020) reports that Christie Brown has built a solid brand image as a well renowned brand in Ghana and across the African continent and global fashion scene. To this effect, the author observes that the brand has a website (<http://ChristieBrownOnline.com/>) which allows consumers to order and purchase fashion products online. In addition, the brand has built a compact presence on most social media handles. These practices go to affirm the brand practices some garment manufacturers are executing as means of developing their brand. Barnes (2020) also recognizes the logo for Christie Brown as shown in Fig.2.2 below;



Fig.2.2 Christie Brown logo

Source: Barnes (2020)

Inspire Africa (2016) reports that PISTIS is also one of the rising fashion brands that keeping building its brand through a number of practices. The report highlights Sumaiya and Kabutry Dzieror as the owners of the fashion brand. In this light, Dadson (2018) observe that PISTIS has been developing their brand over the years by designing and manufacturing unique and gorgeous garments for celebrities and highly influential members in the society. In citing typical example, the author reveals that PISTIS has been designing garment for Ghana's second lady Her Excellency Mrs. Samira Bawumia. This practice keeps building the brand image of PISTIS thereby, attracting other consumers to go in for fashion products from the PISTIS brand. In addition to the above, Dadson (2018) establishes that as a way of building a solid brand image, PISTIS has graced many fashion expos shows not limited to the 'Dubai Season III', 'Glitz Africa Fashion Week', 'Radiance Bridal Show' and 'Vlisco Fashion Show'. More so, Dadson (2018) reports that PISTIS has built a solid brand image by consistently designing garments for the 'Miss Malaika Pageant'. As observed by Inspire Africa (2016) and Dadson (2018), the logo for PISTIS as illustrated in Fig.2.3 has created a brand identity that is associated with exceptional hand beaded bridal gowns coupled with the innovative use of kente and other African prints to bring out the royalty, elegance, and style in their clients. In addition, findings from the above authors highlight the fact the PISTIS has a website (<https://www.pistisghana.com/>) that allows consumers to shop online. This has helped in building in strong brand image thereby, impacting on the marketability of its products.



Fig.2.3 PISTIS logo

Source: Dadson (2018; Inspire Africa, 2016)

The ongoing submissions above affirm the position that some well-established garment manufacturers are conscious of brand development and as such undertake steps to building the

image of their brands. These are noticed through website presence, social media handles, logos and labels as well as participation in fashion shows and designing for celebrities and influential personalities.

However, Garcia (2020) also reports that some designers manufacture garments for renowned celebrities as a way of developing their brand. For instance, Kristin and Kofi Essel have trendy garment designs for top celebrities such as La Anthony, Beyoncé, and Solange. Garcia's report also cites Leslie Wiredu, a renowned fashion designer in Ghana who keeps manufacturing garments for top celebrity artistes in Ghana such as Guru, Eden, 4×4, Sarkodie and the billionaire singer Davido from Nigeria. Such branding practices undoubtedly projects the brand to the outside world as everyone would want to be associated with trusted brands that especially design for celebrities.

Garcia (2020) also reports that one of the male fashion designers (Kofi Okyere Darko (KOD)) has built a solid brand by constantly designing for politicians and other celebrities. Such personalities include the late President Mills, the late President Jerry John Rawlings, Michael Essien, Emmanuel Adebayo, Stephen Appiah and a host of others. As part of branding practices by KOD, a post by Peace Fm Online (2017) explain that KOD hosted a fashion show under the theme 'Rhythms On Da Runway' at the Banquet Hall of the State House in Accra on Saturday, April 1 as a way of launching his NINETEEN57 collections. Since then, Garcia (2020) in corroboration with Owusu (2019) reveal that KOD has partied in a number of fashion weeks as a way of building his brand and marketing his fashion products. Specifically, a reportage of Owusu (2019) in the Daily Guide Network indicates that KOD took part in the Glitz Africa Fashion Week in 2019.

Consequently, Amenyanyo (2018) observes a distinguished designer with the fashion brand 'Abrantie The Gentleman' who uniquely blends the old with the new, thereby merging African tradition and style with a touch of class, confidence, attraction and undying elegance, coupled with a myriad of elements of art that defines a gentleman. As a way of brand development, the author observes that 'Abrantie The Gentleman' has created an Instagram page to allow consumers follow the brand and place orders thereby, advertising the brand on a global stage as a way of building a solid brand identity. Amenyanyo (2018) also notices that the brand has a well-known logo as depicted in Fig.2.4 which enables consumers to be associated with fashion products from the brand hence, developing an effective brand identity.



Fig.2.4 Abrantie The Gentleman logo

Source: Amenyanyo (2018)

Furthermore, an exposition by Gloria on Africa Global Radio (2020) highlights the fact that ‘Abrantie The Gentleman’ undertakes brand practices such as designing for celebrities as a way of building and advertising the brand. Notably among such African celebrities, precisely Ghana are John Dumelo, James Gardiner, Fiifi Coleman, Kalybos, Stonebwoy, Bismark the Joke and Jay Foley. Fig.2.5 spots notable celebrities in Ghana from left (Fiifi Coleman, James Gardner, John Dumelo) in designs made by ‘Abrantie The Gentleman’.



Fig.2.5 Ghanaian celebrities spotted in designs by ‘Abrantie The Gentleman’

Source: Africa Global Radio (2020)

Such branding practices as observed by Dazdie (2018) has enabled the development of a renowned brand for ‘Abrantie The Gentleman’ thereby winning some notable awards such as the best Menswear Brand in the Fashion Ghana Awards in 2018 as shown in Fig.2.6.



Fig.1 Abrantie The Gentleman wins Best Menswear Brand

Source: Dadzie (2018)

Research Methodology

In order to suggest a framework to see to the realization of brand development, its influence, and challenges in the garment manufacturing sector this study applied a case study research design using a qualitative approach. The researcher opted for the qualitative approach because both interviews and focused group discussions were required to answer for the depth of knowledge for the objectives of the study. To collect data, the researcher visited all eight sampled garment manufacturing companies. We began the focus group discussions with the employees who were available in all of the firms. We kept going until we couldn't find any new information. When the researcher felt data saturation had been reached, the process of collecting data was terminated.

At Jenesus Clothing (JC), 4 qualified workers were engaged in a focus group discussion. Out of the 4, 3 were males and 1 was a female. At the time all the four workers were busy working on their garment production. At K2 Clothing (K2 C), 1 male and 3 females were engaged. Starladin Fashionline (SF) also had 2 males and 2 females. With Chris Tailor Creations (CTC), same numbers of participants qualified to be engaged. In respect of Pious Clothing (PC), the participants engaged 1 male against 3 females were engaged. De Tailormade Clothing (DTC) had 3 males and 1 female. Solomax Clothing (SC) had 2 females against 2 males and Nkumenz Unisex Fashion (NUF) had 1 female against 3 males. The last group engaged were the 8 creative directors, out of them were 6 males and 2 females.

Table 4.1: Summary responses from focus group participants

Garment Manufacturing Firms	Male	Female	Total
Jenesus Clothing (JC)	3	1	4
K2 Clothing (K2 C)	1	3	4
Starladin Fashionline (SF)	2	2	4
Chris Tailor Creations (CTC)	2	2	4
Pious Clothing (PC)	1	3	4
De Tailormade Clothing (DTC)	3	1	4
Solomax Clothing (SC)	2	2	4
Nkumenz Unisex Fashion (NUF)	3	1	4
Creative directors	6	2	8
Total	17	23	40

Out of the entire population of 80 participants, only 40 met the criteria to part take in the study. The breakdown were 8 creative directors, vis-à-vis 32 workers presented in 9 focus groups.

Analysis of focus group discussions of the workers (Jenesis Clothing)

As a start, the participants were asked what steps do you take to ensure that people identify your business/brands. Follow-up question was, explain what your brand stand for, they were further asked to state whether the public is aware of your fashion house stands for, and the final question

was share with me, if any, the activities your company does in the community to create awareness of your business. The following answers were given in respect of Jenesis clothing: The four workers had the requisite working experience, all of them had worked for more than five years. All the participants engaged in the focus group discussions reported that their garment manufacturing firm were conscious of branding their products. It was explained that these requirements were comprehensive and covered all aspects of their production. The researcher personally observed and examined their brands to affirm the discussions. Three out of the four asserted that they use social media handles and signboard advertisement to create awareness of their brands. They highlighted that these activities had contributed immensely in developing the brand Jenesus Clothing. They also mentioned that their fashion firm's (Jenesis clothing) presence on social media enables people to easily identify the brand and associate themselves with the brand.

Analysis of focus group discussions results of the workers (Chris Tailor Creations)

With regard to Chris Tailor Creations, the following answers were given on the discussions of brand consciousness: all the four workers opened that (focus group discussions, May 11, 2021) their brand is conscious of the need to create effective brand awareness in order to ensure the survival of their business in the rather competitive landscape of the garment industry. In the discussions, they disclosed that their firm (Chris Tailor Creations) leverage on Facebook and Instagram accounts to create awareness of their brand and advertise their products using its social media handles. Accordingly, the workers disclosed that their brand stands for creativity, confidence and authenticity; thus, all their garment collections advertised fall into the category of creativity and confidence. This has been fruitful in the firm's brand awareness creation. The workers further opened that their evidence is seen in the positive comments received by clients as opined by the participants. The discussion further brought to light that their fashion brands leverage on considerable efforts made last year through the distribution of free nose masks to help reduce the spread of the deadly global pandemic of COVID-19. This according to the workers has increased the brand's awareness to the public.

Analysis of focus group discussions results of the workers (Pious Clothing)

Interestingly, At Pious Clothing, all the four participants engaged in the discussion (Focus Group, May 10, 2021) opined that their brand creation and awareness activities have been dominated by social media presence, using photoshoot and signboard advertisement. This according to them enable clients and the general public to easily identify their fashion products and associate well with the brand. The workers further opened that such activities have been successful as it has drawn people from far and near to purchase their products. When asked about the brand element used in promoting their brands, the discussions opened that they used logo which helps clients to easily identify and associate with the brand. It was explained that the logo together with the initials of the brand is always printed on their garments produced. However, the were not using slogan. More so, it was explained that knew website could increase the visibility of garment manufacturers to the world, their brand was yet to get a website. That notwithstanding, their brand employs social

media in marketing. Also, they mentioned the use of signboards as an effective medium of promoting the visibility of the brand in its locality and thus, makes identification and directions to the brand's location easier. Furthermore, the brand has not yet developed any form of customised packaging bags for its clients. Unfortunately, the discussions also revealed that the brand has not yet participated in any fashion show nor engaged in any form of TV/radio advertisement. However, the brand employs mannequins in portraying the beauty their garments to people.

Analysis of focus group discussions results of the workers (K2 Clothing)

A similar discussion held at K2 Clothing (Focus Group, May 12, 2021) also affirmed the imperatives of social media in building the fashion brand including the following: According to the four participants (workers), some considerable steps have been taken by the firm to ensure that people are able to identify the brand and associate themselves with it. The participants also revealed that because the brand stands for neatwork and prompt delivery, clients are able to do business with the brand and the display of garments using mannequins. In their view it helps people recognize the creativity and neatwork for which K2 Clothing stands for. The discussions revealed through Facebook platform and WhatsApp status, the firm is able to effectively create awareness of its business, services and products and this helps the firm to gain a wider market segment. As a result, their branding creation activities as mentioned above have proven beneficial especially when, people call to order for garments they see on the company's business pages on social media. Similarly, to that of K2 Clothing, the group opined that Pious Clothing has not engaged in any community activity as a way of creating awareness for the business.

Analysis of focus group discussions results of the workers (Starladin Fashionline)

Follow-up discussions with workers from Starladin Fashionline, the following responses were acquired. The study revealed that elements such as logo and labels in addition to visibility on social media has been some of the steps taken by the firm to create awareness of the brand and drawn people into recognizing and associating themselves with the brand. They further revealed that the brand stands for uniqueness and stylish designs as opined by the participants (Focus Group, May 13, 2021), the firm ensures to post garments of such nature on its social media handles as a way of heightening brand creation and awareness. The study further gathered that people know of Stardalin Fashionline and as such, are ready to do business with the fashion brand.

On the concern of brand elements employed by Starladin Fashion, the discussions opened that the brand occasionally come out with collections that has the company's logo printed on it. This according to the workers enables its clients and the public to identify Starladin Fashionline and associate with the brand. It was also explained that the brand employ slogan when dealing with customers. According to the workers, the brand's slogan creates an impression to their clients that their fashion products and style makes them feel like that of a star. With regard to financial challenges, the workers were of the view that financial challenge is their greatest concern in branding, followed by inadequate trainees to enable their brand to be known in the community.

Analysis of focus group discussions results of the workers (Solomax Clothing)

The researcher garnered the following responses from the discussions held with workers from Solomax Clothing (*Focus Group, May 13, 2021*). Excellent garment finishing and improved packaging that meets the taste of clients have helped in a formidable brand creation and awareness for the brand. This according to the workers enables people to build trust in the brand and thereby, increasing patronage. The discussions also opined that touching on the community activities undertaken by the firm as a way of increasing its brand awareness, the study shows that, similar firms visited such as Chris Tailor Creations and De Tailormade Clothing, participants at Solomax Clothing affirmed the fact that the brand helped in distributing free nose masks to people in the community. To this effect, workers affirm that, it has considerably increased their brand awareness.

In view of the issue of using brand elements as a brand development technique. The discussions with the workers revealed that their brand uses unique logo which gives identification to their business/brand. In addition to the logo, the brand employs the slogan, “Fashion is our Passion”. According to the workers, their brand’s slogan drives them to give out their best when sewing for clients. They also posit that their brand does not have a website; however, they believe website could help garment manufacturers to sell to the world. In the absence of the website, the workers advanced that their brand employs social media in effective marketing and brand development. They further indicated that they used signboards to strategically position their brand to help people pick their contact and easily locate them. Regardless of the fact that Solomax Creations has not customised packaging bags for its clients. It was explained that their brand has participated in five fashion shows as a means of building their brand. The researcher gathered from the discussions that through the fashion shows, Solomax Creations as a brand, has grown bigger and become more visible. Touching on TV/radio advertisement, the group indicated that the expensive nature of such advertisement, has made it impossible for his brand to be engaged in TV/radio advertisement. That notwithstanding, the brand employs mannequins which helps give a true reflection of how the garments would appear on clients. This according to the group has helped increased patronage. In respect of challenges, Solomax Creations disclosed that branding itself is expensive and this has been a challenge, because of financial instability.

Analysis of focus group discussions results of the workers (De Tailor Fashion)

The researcher obtained the following responses from the focus group discussions: Speaking on the issue of brand consciousness, the workers of De Tailormade Clothing hinted on the contribution of social media in helping to create their brand. According to him, the brand stands for uniqueness and creative work. In their opinions it is portrayed in the number of collections posted on its social media handles by way of advertisement to create awareness of the existence of De Tailormade Clothing coupled with its unique garment designs. According to the workers, brand development has proven fruitful amidst the emergence of the global COVID-19 pandemic due to

the fact that, the brand leverages on its presence on social media to advertise its fashion products. Hence, people were aware of the brand and are able to make purchases.

On the issues of brand elements and practises by these SME garment producers, the workers made it known that their brand has a logo printed on their garments as a form of advertisement to help build the brand. However, they were not using slogan and website. Also, according to their discussions, their brand has gained online visibility on social media, which helps attracts potential clients and thus, increasing patronage. With regard to easier identification, their brand strategically positioned signboards to aid in easier identification and direction to the location of their business. However, they were using customized packaging bags. With respect to fashion shows, the discussions opened that their brand has participated in two fashion shows which helped people to perceive the level of creativity of De Tailormade Clothing. This according to the them was helpful. Furthermore, they affirmed the use of mannequins in displaying the beauty of their products to the public which attracted more potential clients and thus, results in increment of sales and profitability.

Analysis of focus group discussions results of the workers (Nkumenz Unisex Fashion Clothing)

The researcher gathered from the focus group discussions the following responses on the state of consciousness branding: At Nkumenz Unisex Fashion, the workers opened that through the advancement of using social media effectively in creating its brand awareness ie Facebook and Instagram as well as WhatsApp. According to the workers brand stands for quality and neatwork as such, is clients and general public is able to recognise this through the delivery of its garments and posts/advertisement on the brand's social media handles. In their opinions, Nkumenz Uunisex Fashion has been in business for over two decades now as such, the public has built trust in the brand and this has contributed to an enhanced brand awareness among its clients and the Ghanaian populace. Touching on community activities undertaken to boost awareness of the brand, the group indicated the distribution of nose masks to its clients rather the community in general.

On the issue of using brand elements, the workers at Nkumenz Uunisex Fashion disclosed that their brand uses logo but not slogan. They believe their works speak for itself hence, the absence of a slogan. It was further disclosed that their brand has no website, even though they acknowledge the significance of website on the global market. That notwithstanding, their presence on social media handles helps potential clients to contact the brand for business. Also, the discussions opened that their signboards help in easy identification of the directions of their business. In respect of customized packaging, they indicated no, they do not have it. Additionally, they have not yet participated in any form of fashion show. However, they had some form of engagement with TV/Radio advertisement, that Nkumenz Unisex Fashion sponsors some media personalities with their costumes and in return, they also advertise the brand. They further added that, the brand employs mannequins in displaying the beauty of their products to potential clients and this helps increase sales.

Analysis of focus group discussions results of the Creative Directors.

The researcher finally engaged all the focus creative directors in a focus group discussion. The following responses were gathered, almost all the Creative Directors were conscious of their brands in order to ensure the survival of business in the competitive garment industry. They explained that they were leveraging on the advantage of social media to create awareness of their brands. It was further explained that through the aforementioned mediums, the study revealed from the contentions of the Creative Director that Chris Tailor Creations stands for authenticity, confidence and unity and the public is able to recognise and associate themselves with the brand because of its brand conscious activities undertaken via social media platforms as well as fashion shows and exhibitions. This claim was not too different from that of the other creative directors. Further to their opinions, they have taken the right steps to increase its visibility to the public through social media platforms as well as participating in exhibitions and fashion shows. In respect of the activities their garment firms do to create awareness in their community, almost all of them leverage on the emergence of the COVID-19 last year to distribute nose masks to some communities apart from K2 Clothing and Pious Clothing. This according to the Creative Director increased the brand's awareness to the public. In respect of identification of their respective brands in the public, the study gathered that almost all of the creative directors claim they were conscious of the benefits of their brand identification. Hence, they were known for quality garment production, visible, effective, and hard work without unnecessary delay. Then again, in their opinions, almost all of them were of the view that they engage in weekly postings of their finished products on Facebook, Instagram, frequent photoshoot, signboard advertisement, social media handles, among others.

Discussion of results

The outcome of this present study via focus group discussions was subjected to interpretations, discussions, and document analysis. The findings were gathered from Kumasi Metropolis garment producers. The main objectives of the research were utilized as the main themes in reporting the results from focus group conversations and document reviews. Data from focus group audio and field observations were combined and categorized according to the study's main themes. The participants' actual words were employed to convey information as they were being said. The following is an overview of the major issues brought up by this chapter:

The consciousness of branding by selected SMEs garment manufacturers in Kumasi Metropolis.

The selected SMEs garment manufacturers were conscious of their brands; hence, leveraging on the advantage of social media to create awareness of their brands. Their brands represented, quality works, neatwork, creativity, trust worthy, unique and stylish, among others. The public knows their brands on their social media handles. Almost all of them leverage on the emergence of the COVID-19 last year to distribute nose masks to their communities as a way of brand development.

According to Chi, Yeh, and Yang (2009), perceived quality is the general view of consumers on the reliability of a brand good or service and the reasons for which it is intended. The perceived quality of a brand has a significant impact on customer behavior. For example, if consumers believe that a product's quality is excellent and that it will meet their needs, they will purchase it. Similarly, customers would not purchase a brand product for which they already hold a negative perception (Poolthong & Mandhachitara, 2009).

Evidence gathered from this present study opened that Garment manufacturers in the Kumasi Metropolis are aware of the competitive environment in which they operate; hence they are very conscious of their brand development techniques. As majority of them leverage on the advantage of social media handles to advertise the uniqueness of distribute their brand. They were conscious of the quality, stylish, network, trustworthy, among others. Hence, the public knew them for the quality of work. It was also interesting to note that majority of them took advantage of the emergence of COVID-19 last year to nose masks to their communities as a way of brand development.

Companies can also use perceived quality to draw in more customers. Companies strive to provide positive first-time user experiences with their brands. When consumers purchase a brand for the initial time and are reassured that it is of high quality, they will make more subsequent purchases. These return purchases are influenced by their belief that the successive products are of the same quality as the initial brand product. Buyers make purchasing decisions based on their perception of quality (Doh & Hwang, 2009). In some cases, customers find it difficult to select a product from a large selection of similar products. As a result, perceived quality guides them in selecting believe is of the best quality (Aaker, 2012).

It was established that garment manufacturers in the Kumasi Metropolis view their work as a duty assigned to them by their customers. Hence, they are conscious of the quality of their works. Garment manufacturers strongly believe that they are carrying a mandate set by their customers; they perceive that the general public are recognizing their quality works through them. They indicated that despite them being there to serve their customers for financial gains, they are focused on building a brand that perceives quality and not following traditional ways of doing business.

Brand elements employed by SMEs garment manufacturers

Almost all of the garment manufacturers used logos to depict their identity. Few of them had slogans. All of them did not have websites, Alost all of them were represented on social media, few of the had customized packaging bags, Majority of them have participated in fashion shows. Few of them had engaged in TV/Radio advertisements. Few of them have costumed celebrities. Majority of them used mannequins. According to scholars' brand elements must be memorable, meaningful, likeable, transferable, adaptable and protectable as a criterion for selection (Aaker, 1997, Kotler, 1991; Keller, 2003). A lot is written about brand development, particularly in these recent times. Empirical evidence proves that some medium-sized establishment in the garment manufacturing industry undertakes some branding practices as a way of developing their brands

and marketing their products. For instance, the exposition of Haute Fashion Africa (2018), it is observed that Christie Brown, a highly renowned fashion brand owned by Aisha Obuobi do partake in Fashion Weeks as a way of building the brand and promoting its fashion products. The exposition reveals that, Christie Brown took part in the ‘Arise Africa Fashion Week’ in Johannesburg in 2009 and won the Emerging Designer of the Year Award. Furthermore, a study by Gloria on Africa Global Radio (2020) highlights the fact that ‘Abrantie The Gentleman’ undertakes brand practices such as designing for celebrities as a way of building and advertising the brand. Notably among such African celebrities, precisely Ghana are John Dumelo, James Gardiner, Fiifi Coleman, Kalybos, Stonebwoy, Bismark the Joke and Jay Foley.

Notable celebrities in Ghana from left (Fiifi Coleman, James Gardner, John Dumelo) in designs made by ‘Abrantie The Gentleman’. Ghanaian celebrities spotted in designs by ‘Abrantie The Gentleman’ Africa Global Radio (2020)



Ghanaian celebrities spotted in designs by ‘Abrantie The Gentleman’ (Africa Global Radio 2020)

The findings revealed that the SMEs garment manufacturers in the Kumasi Metropolis currently employ various kinds of brand elements in developing their brands. Interestingly, almost of them had logos on their finished products. They were represented on their social media handles which is also a very key branding technique in this contemporary times. Some of them had participated on fashion shows, costumed celebrities and engaged in TV/Radio advertisement. However, few of them had slogans, with no websites, even though they knew the privileges websites could bring to them in terms of branding. This suggest that the SMEs garment manufacturers were partially equipped with branding elements; hence, the need to up their brand development elements to meet global standards.

Conclusions and recommendations

The study concludes that the small-scale garment manufacturers were conscious of their brands; hence, leveraged the advantage of social media to create awareness of their brands. Their brands represented, quality works, neatwork, creativity, trustworthy unique, and stylish among others. The public knows their brands on their social media handles. Almost all of them leveraged the

emergence of the COVID-19 last year to distribute nose masks to their communities as a way of brand development. Also, the garment manufacturers used logos to depict their identity, represented on social media, participated in fashion shows, and used mannequins. However, few of them had slogans, customized packaging bags, TV/Radio advertisements, and costumed celebrities with no websites. Some of the challenges they faced include financial challenges, inadequate trainees and no government support.

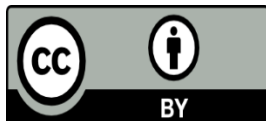
The study recommends that the small-scale garment manufacturers should invest in continuous brand development strategies by implementing new generational abilities to inculcate new branding technologies to enable them survive in the global competitive environment. The SMEs garment manufacturers should maximize their identities to harness their realistic differences, employ unique social media identities, participate in contemporary fashion displays, use models and continuous use of their brand logos. The SMEs garment manufacturers should engage in money making ventures, introduce cooperative avenues where they can lend monies to themselves, sources for financial assistance as financial challenges were common to all the garment manufacturers.

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